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SUBJECT: (U) Deputy Secretary Steinberg's February 12,
2009 Conversation with Lithuanian Minister of Defense Rasa
Juknevičienė

11. (U) Classified by EUR Assistant Secretary Daniel Fried
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

12. (U) February 12, 2009, 8:20 - 8:40, Washington, D.C.

13. (U) Participants:

U.S.

Deputy Secretary James Steinberg
EUR/DAS Judith Garber
Special Assistant Mary Sue Conaway
Carol Beilman Werner (EUR/NB Notetaker)

Lithuania

Minister of Defense Rasa Juknevičienė
MOD Secretary of the Ministry Andrius Krivas
DCM Tomas Gulbinas
Defense Attache Colonel Antanas Jurgaitis

14. (C) SUMMARY. Deputy Secretary Steinberg's February 12
meeting with Lithuanian Minister of Defense Rasa
Juknevičienė highlighted energy security, Afghanistan and
Russia. The Minister noted the importance of energy
security to Lithuania, advocating that a NATO Center of
Excellence for Energy Security be opened in Vilnius. She
also reported that Lithuania planned to increase its
contributions to Afghanistan. Juknevičienė and Deputy
Secretary Steinberg agreed that it was essential to
explain to the European public the role that EU
deployments to Afghanistan played in fighting terrorism in
Europe. The Minister emphasized Lithuania's concerns about
Russia and desire for NATO contingency planning for the
Baltic states. Deputy Secretary Steinberg also expressed
appreciation for Lithuania's conditional decision to
accept Guantanamo detainees and acknowledged
Juknevičienė's request for a meeting with Secretary
Clinton for the Lithuanian Foreign Minister. END SUMMARY.

Energy Security

15. (C) Juknevičienė raised energy security, noting that
its importance to Lithuania had spurred the Government
(GOL) to create a separate Ministry of Energy. The GOL
wants NATO to establish a Center of Excellence for Energy
Security in Vilnius and was willing to open the center
itself in the hope that NATO could later take it over.

Afghanistan

16. (C) In spite of Lithuania's financial difficulties,
Juknevičienė assured Deputy Secretary Steinberg that
Lithuania still planned to increase its contributions to
Afghanistan by enlarging the number of troops in its PRT
in Ghor Province, and in its SOF squadron in Kandahar.

She added, however, that many in the Lithuanian public questioned the value of Lithuania's participation in the war in Afghanistan. Deputy Secretary Steinberg responded that it was very important during and after the upcoming NATO Summit to reach out to NATO publics to explain how critical the war in Afghanistan is to Europe and U.S. security.

Russia

17. (C) Jukneviene asserted that Russia still posed a significant threat and that NATO contingency planning for the Baltic states would reassure Lithuanians of NATO's ability to defend the region. She added that Lithuania would continue to fight for NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia. Deputy Secretary Steinberg acknowledged Lithuania's historical experience with Russia, but explained that it was necessary to find the right balance between NATO preparedness and antagonizing Russia.

18. (C) When Jukneviene asked about missile defense plans for Europe, Deputy Secretary Steinberg reminded her that missile defense is intended to deal with emerging proliferation threats, particularly Iran. If Iran changes course and gives up its nuclear weapons program, that would address immediate concerns, and we would need to

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Guantanamo Detainees

19. (C) Deputy Secretary Steinberg expressed appreciation for Lithuania's willingness to accept detainees from Guantanamo, noting that since the EU wanted Guantanamo closed, EU countries should share the burden of resettling detainees.

CLINTON